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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO  
WASHINGTON: SETTING THE AGENDA

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Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SUMMARY:

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¶1. (C) Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Dipu Moni's September 14 - 17 visit to Washington will be the highest level bilateral meeting between the U.S. and Bangladesh since 2006 and comes almost nine months after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government took office. The newly elected administrations in Dhaka and Washington have an opportunity to build upon the strong foundation of a bilateral relationship focused on the "3 D's" (Democracy, Development, and Denial of Space to Terrorists). Looking ahead, in addition to the 3 D's, the bilateral relationship should place greater emphasis on emerging issues such as climate change, women's empowerment, public-private partnership, food security, and global health -- all areas where our interests coincide. We suggest that these new areas of cooperation be the centerpiece of the Foreign Minister's meeting with the Secretary and other senior USG officials. In the short term, we believe there are concrete deliverables worth pursuing in each of these principal pillars of the relationship.

Who is Dipu Moni?

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¶2. (C) In a cabinet of relative newcomers, Dipu Moni stands out as a rising star and one of the Prime Minister's closest confidantes. Moni's recent elevation to Joint Secretary General of the ruling Awami League is a further indication that the Prime Minister is grooming the Foreign Minister for future leadership within the party and government. Moni has advanced due to a strong family political pedigree, a well deserved reputation for academic brilliance, and absolute loyalty to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina during the latter's imprisonment by the 2007 -- 2009 Caretaker Government. Moni, who has advanced degrees in law, medicine, and public health, had previously served as the Awami League's party secretary for women's affairs and was a surprise choice for Foreign Minister. In her first months on the job, Moni has proven to be a quick study and a valuable interlocutor, but still lacks experience in Foreign Affairs. Her closest advisor is her husband, one of Bangladesh's leading attorneys, who will be accompanying her to Washington. Recently appointed Advisor for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Gowher Rizvi, also will likely serve

as a mentor for the Foreign Minister, particularly on Indo-Bangladesh issues. Moni will face a major test when she visits New Delhi September 8 to lay the groundwork for Hasina's upcoming visit to India.

#### Bangladesh's Agenda

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**¶13. (C)** When she meets the Secretary September 16, the Foreign Minister will likely stress the ruling Awami League's democratic and secular credentials. Moni will contrast the current regime with that led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party between 2001 - 2006, which the AL believes provided shelter to extremists. The Foreign Minister will likely stress her genuine personal commitment to human rights and social justice and outline the "Vision 2021" which formed the basis of the Awami League's election manifesto. Moni will certainly request the Secretary's support for obtaining enhanced market access for Bangladesh's ready-made garment exports to the United States. She is also likely to request debt relief in the form of a second tranche under the Tropical Forests Conservation Act. We expect the Foreign Minister to stress her government's commitment to partnering with the U.S. and others to fight terrorism. She may link this to the GOB's desire to try alleged 1971 war criminals and bring to justice the killers of former President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. (Note: at least two of the alleged killers are seeking asylum in the U.S., while a third was deported back to Dhaka from the United States in 2007.)

#### U.S. Priorities

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**¶14. (C)** We recommend the Secretary stress the importance of good governance (including fighting corruption) and highlight

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our shared desire to combat transnational terrorism. The Secretary could also highlight the importance of private sector-led development and note the desire of major U.S. corporations like Boeing, Chevron, Conoco Phillips, GE, and Coca Cola to expand their presence in Bangladesh. Whether in meeting Bangladesh's energy needs or providing much needed jobs, these companies can help Sheikh Hasina's government fulfill its election pledges but have all faced bureaucratic obstacles since the AL came to power. As we seek to promote greater public-private partnerships we should also seek to leverage the Bangladeshi diaspora community in the United States. In this regard, the Foreign Minister has expressed interest in learning more about the possible establishment of a Bangladesh Foundation. In recent decades, Bangladesh's non-governmental sector has thrived, and NGOs such as Grameen Bank and BRAC have received international acclaim for helping to empower women, improve education and health, and fight poverty. These achievements were exactly what President Obama was referring to in his Cairo Speech when he spoke of new partnerships with Muslim-majority countries.

#### Cooperation on Global Issues

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**¶15. (C)** There are opportunities for the U.S. to work closely with Bangladesh on global issues such as climate change, food security, and global economic recovery. We should encourage Bangladesh to continue its leading role in UN peacekeeping, particularly in Africa, which has helped to improve the prospects for stability in that continent. We have pressed Bangladesh to add its voice to the growing number of states that have recognized Kosovo's independence. We should look forward to working with Bangladesh during the upcoming UNGA session and in international conferences on climate change. (Note: Two British cabinet members are visiting Dhaka August 31 - September 1 to discuss climate change issues with the GOB in advance of the Prime Minister's travel to Geneva for an international climate change conference.)

Deliverables

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¶6. (C) As we look ahead to the Foreign Minister's visit to the U.S., there are several areas we should focus on in the short term as tangible examples of how the bilateral relationship can be strengthened. We have identified several possible deliverables in each of the four primary pillars of the relationship: Security; Governance; Economic Growth; and Regional/Global issues. These include:

- An agreed way forward on engagement with the Rapid Action Battalion
- Continued high-level contact, including U.S. visits to Bangladesh
- Conclusion of a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement
- Creation of a Bangladesh Foundation
- Engagement on Climate Change in the run-up to Copenhagen
- Fostering GOB security cooperation with India

Comment

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¶7. (C) The Prime Minister often refers to her 1996 - 2001 term in office as the "golden age" of U.S.-Bangladesh relations, which was capped by President Clinton's visit to Dhaka. Since taking office, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister have clearly emphasized the importance they place on strong U.S.-Bangladesh relations. At the same time, the GOB's priority since January has been on domestic political matters. With the GOB's focus now turning to defining Bangladesh's role in the region and beyond, the Foreign Minister's upcoming visit to Washington could not come at a better time.

MORIARTY